

The Barbarian's Companion: Volunteer's Guide

THANKS FOR volunteering to play The Barbarian's Bloody Quest with us! Here are the rules.

1. Your Goal in the Game:

You're doing us a favor just by playing, so you don't have to worry about winning or losing the game. Your goal is just to say things that you, personally, find honestly entertaining.

2. Your Main Job:

Almost your only job is to get with the other volunteer and make up answers to our questions.

We'll ask things like "we're set upon by raiders. What are they like?" You and your fellow volunteer can imagine any raiders you want, exactly the raiders you find most fun, and tell me about them together.

If you want to ask us any questions before you answer ours, to make sure you've got all the details right or whatever, please do! We'll be more than happy to answer them.

Sometimes the answer to one of our questions will be obvious, or you'll already know it from what somebody's said before. In that case, just give the obvious answer, no need to second guess.

Sometimes one of our questions will be way out, weird, maybe contextless. You can always ask us clarifying questions, but you can also just say whatever pops into your head and let us be the ones who have to make sense of it.

Sometimes We'll show you one of our sheets and have you choose something from a list, too. Always choose whichever option seems best to you at the moment.

On the reverse, see also "A Bestiary," which includes some ideas that you can use and build on.

If we talk over each other or make your job otherwise difficult, you may remind us to get ourselves in order, as sharply as you wish.

3. The Book of Doomed Wizards:

Be sure that we hand "The Book of Doomed Wizards" over to you. Get with the other volunteer, take a look at it, and follow the rules you find there. We'll direct you to refer to it when we need you to.

4. You and the Other Volunteer:

In order for anything to really count, you and the other volunteer have to agree on it. If you don't agree about something, it's not true until you do. Talk it over until you're both satisfied. We'll wait!

The reason there are two of you, by the way, is that this way you can trade off and build on each others' ideas. Neither of you has to do all the work.

If you have any trouble coming to agreement and you want to use some kind of system to decide, like R-P-S or flipping a coin or dibs or something, that's none of our business. Whatever works for you. Just let us know what you've decided.

We have 6-sided dice you can borrow if you want to roll them.

5. Ending the game:

Any of us can end the game whenever we want, for any reason or none at all. It doesn't matter how abrupt it might be.

If, at any point, it seems impossible to entertain yourself, or not worth it, or anything like that, don't hesitate, just call an end.

6. Thank you!

You're the best! We're lucky to have you.

The Barbarian's Companion: A Bestiary

1. The World:

It's the Ancient World, before the Age of Empires.

It's not Earth, probably, although it has a single yellow sun and a single white moon and three stars in a row in the winter sky that everyone recognizes. It has summers and winters, forests and deserts, great various continents and unmeasured salt seas. It has horses, dogs, cats, birds, cattle, lions, hyenas, camels, llamas, marsupials, mustelidae, primates, pachyderms.

If you went there you could breathe the air but the language would be unknown to you and the food and fashions unfamiliar.

2. Human Nature:

Human beings love to have full bellies, warm rugs, sweet sad music, and their loved ones nearby.

They hate violence, hunger, fear, cold, injustice, and their friends who have wronged them.

They work stone, clay, wood, metal, cloth, fur, glass, horn, sinew, bark, leaves, leather, and reeds. They cook their food, brew their drink, bury their pickles, eat fruit in season, eat fish when it runs, and eat salt when they have it. They hold their nose when the healer makes them swallow balms and pungencies.

3. Civilization and "Barbarity":

Human beings create polities no bigger than city-states, usually, and usually no longer-lived than dynasties. The greatest and the least usually eat grain from the same fields and hunt ducks on the same rivers.

Standing armies are vanishingly rare. Professional law enforcement is unknown. There are professionals of law in many cities, but they're clerks and interpreters, lawyers and arbiters. For enforcement, they depend on ad-hoc assemblies, mobs under their control. Cities don't have civil prisons, but they do have forced labor camps, and the powerful sometimes keep private dungeons for their enemies.

Many human beings live their lives in settled polities smaller than cities: self-organized, independent villages and towns. Sometimes these owe tribute and political affiliation to powerful cities nearby. Sometimes they confederate with one another instead, sending their town elders or representatives to meet together to negotiate policies on matters of shared concern, or going to war with each other when peaceful negotiation is too much trouble.

And many human beings live their lives on the move, in villages that follow the seasonal routes of migrating animals and life cycles of important plants.

"Barbarian" is what a city-dweller calls anyone less settled than they. It's unnecessary and rude, but what do you expect.

4. Coins:

Much city organization centers on the granary. The city organizes planting and harvest, prepares for drought and plenty, and always takes good care of the gods and goddesses of agriculture. A city's economy runs on granary chits, markers or tokens that let you draw a ration of grain, beer, or other better fare. Some cities mint their granary tokens in copper with complicated designs to dissuade forgery, but whenever you talk about "coins" in play, they could be impressed clay tablets, notched wooden rods, or printed cloth squares instead.

Some smaller polities affiliate or trade with powerful cities nearby, and in these regions, common "coins" circulate.

5. Wizards:

A wizard is a person who, by diligent study and a brash willingness to cheat fate and nature, learns to perceive and manipulate the plasmic energy that suffuses the world.

As wizards grow in power, they inevitably exchange elements of their human nature for plasmic versions of the same. Their willingness to cheat nature, sooner or later, extends to the natural processes of their own lives.

A powerful wizard is alienated from human life, and is able to regard it — and all life! — as a resource, not as a value.

Your Name:

& Your Pronouns:

Your Qualities _____

	<i>Tally</i>	<i>Final Tally</i>
Attractive		<input type="text"/>
Knowing		<input type="text"/>
Quick		<input type="text"/>
Unkind		<input type="text"/>

Unlocked Thieves' Skills _____

Rules of Play _____

To start a session: Get together with the barbarian. Find 2 volunteers. Choose a spawning circumstance and explain it to them to begin play.

Your goal: Your goal in the game is to be and stay in love with the barbarian — or else to find the limit of your love.

The fundamentals of the game:

1. Ask your volunteers questions.
2. Make the leap to action.
3. Look for opportunities to exert yourself.
4. Take turns with the barbarian.

To roll: Roll a number of 6-sided dice equal to your rating. Count each 4, 5 or 6 as **a hit**. If you roll no hits, **it's a miss**.

Your Exertions:

Exercise Caution:

To grasp and react to an uncertain situation.
= Your Knowing + 1

Exert Your Charm:

To open up to someone or draw them out.
= Your Attractive + Your Knowing

Exert Yourself Furtively:

To use your thieves' skills.
= Your Quick + your Unkind

Thieves' Skills:

- Avoid Notice.
- Gain Entry Uninvited.
- Rob Someone.
- Any others you've unlocked in play, noted opposite.

Exert Yourself Physically:

Against the mass and momentum of an uncooperative or unsensible thing.
= Your Quick + 1

Exert Yourself Violently:

Against an Enemy.
= Your Quick + your Unkind

Exert Your Wit:

To provoke, enrage, delight, belittle, shock, or entertain an audience.
= Your Attractive + your Unkind

Submit to Circumstance:

Instead of exerting yourself, just trying to come out on your feet.
= Your Knowing + your Quick

Notes, Modifiers & Exceptions: